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The New Man Hits Town

When Washington and the President-elect came eye to eye, each liked what was seen. The watchword, at least for now: Mutual respect.

Ronald Reagan's five-day, whirlwind visit to Washington in late November served notice that he is determined to avoid the same mistakes that dogged Jimmy Carter's administration.

Leaders of all three branches of government were left with that impression as Reagan flew back to California on November 21 to begin the next phase of preparations for his Presidency: Selecting a cabinet.

As the next President explored the city that will be his home for four years, sizing up its power brokers and letting them take his measure, the names of his possible cabinet choices kept leaking out.

Front-runners for key jobs included Reagan's lawyer, William French Smith, for Attorney General and William E. Simon for Secretary of the Treasury, a post the Wall Streeter held in the Nixon and Ford administrations.

In meetings with Congress, the Supreme Court, the executive branch and local society leaders, Reagan also made headway toward the major objectives of his Presidency—a balanced budget, tax cuts and a stronger defense. He let it be known that as soon as he takes the oath of office on January 20 he will begin implementing the plans now being drawn up by his advisers. As the President-elect put it: "We're going to start grabbing right away."

Reagan made it clear that he was not ignoring world events. He sat down with Central Intelligence Agency officials for briefings and sent word to the South Korean regime that he, like Carter, opposed its plans to execute opposition leader Kim Dae Jung. He met with Helmut Schmidt during the West German Chancellor's November 20 stop in Washington.

On the same day, for the first time since the election, Reagan met with Carter, spending 80 minutes with him in the Oval Office. Carter called the meeting "a delightful experience," during which he talked to his successor about the problems he will inherit.

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Although the list of potential cabinet appointees was not made public, it was known to include the names of Smith, Simon and a number of others with close ties to Reagan. Smith, 63, a prominent Los Angeles lawyer, was himself a member of the screening committee. Simon was reported to be a unanimous first choice of committee members. Other names on the list included:

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Director of Central Intelligence:
William Casey, a New York lawyer who
ran Reagan's campaign committee and
previously headed the Securities and
Exchange Commission.

By SARA FRITZ

EXCERPTED